

Message Text

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46

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

AS-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 AID-05 OMB-01 DHA-02

/064 W

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O 181700Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1370

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

DIA WASHDC

CINUSNAVEUR

COMFAIRMED NAPLES

COMSIXTH FLEET

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 8955

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: THE 1975 POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY -- A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

REF: A. ATHENS 8919

B. ATHENS 8865

1. IF THERE EVER WAS ANY DOUBT, FOUR DAYS OF COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS IN ATHENS (BEING REPORTED BY SEPTTEL), AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES IN ALL MAJOR GREEK CITIES, HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT THE VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED AT THE ATHENS POLYTECHNION UNIVERSITY TWO YEARS AGO HAVE ASSUMED THE PROPORTIONS OF A NATIONAL SYMBOL IN THE EYES OF GREEKS AND, IN PARTICULAR, GREEK YOUTH. THE VAST MAJORITY OF GREEKS WHO DID NOTHING TO OPPOSE THE JUNTA NOW COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLYTECHNION, THE ONE CONCRETE INSTANCE OF POPULAR RESISTANCE TO THE JUNTA, AND IN CELEBRATING IT ATONE IN PART FOR THEIR ACQUIESCENCE DURING SEVEN YEARS OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

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2. THE COMMEMORATION OF THE NOVEMBER 1973 EVENTS AT THE POLYTECHNION IS THUS ON ONE LEVEL A NATIONAL CELEBRATION OF DEMOCRACY. THE SPEECHES AND FESTIVALS AND MASSIVE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE IN CONNECTION WITH THE POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY WERE INTENSE AND TOOK PLACE THROUGHOUT GREECE. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THESE ACTIVITIES RANGED ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. SYMBOLIC OF THIS NATIONAL CONSENSUS WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF, IN THE PERSON OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION ZEPPOS, DEPOSITED A FLORAL WREATH AT THE SCHOOL, EVEN THOUGH THE EVENTS THERE, LIKE THE MARCH, WERE ORGANIZED BY THE GREEK LEFT AND FAR LEFT. ZEPPOS' ACT WAS NOT INTENDED TO ENDORSE THE LEFT'S POLITICS BUT TO SHOW THAT ALL GREEKS HONORED AND PAID TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AT THE POLYTECHNION WHILE PROTESTING AGAINST THE MILITARY REGIME AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS A MOVE TO PREVENT THE APPROPRIATION OF THE EVENT BY THE ANTI-AMERICAN LEFT.

3. IF THE CANONIZATION OF THE POLYTECHNION WERE MERELY A CELEBRATION OF GREECE'S RETURN TO FREEDOM, IT WOULD BE OF INTEREST, BUT NOT CONCERN, TO THE UNITED STATES. BUT THIS YEAR, LIKE LAST YEAR, ANTI-AMERICANISM PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE ACTIVITIES. AS THE ORGANIZERS INTENDED, THE MARCHERS -- WHO WHILE PREDOMINANTLY YOUTHFUL ALSO INCLUDED MANY MORE MATURE GREEKS -- TRACE A ROUTE FROM THE POLYTECHNION TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO REINFORCING AN EXISTING IDENTITY IN THE POPULAR MIND BETWEEN THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND THE JUNTA AND, HOWEVER ILLOGICAL IT MAY SEEM TO AMERICANS, INDIRECTLY AT LEAST BETWEEN THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND THE POLYTECHNION. THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH PRIVATELY AND TO SOME EXTENT PUBLICLY DEPLORES ANTI-AMERICANISM

, PROBABLY FELT, IF IT CONSIDERED DOING SO, THAT IT COULD DEFLECT THE MARCH FROM THE EMBASSY -- BY CHANGING THE ROUTE -- BUT ONLY AT THE COST OF DIMINISHING ITS IDENTITY WITH DEMOCRACY AND POPULAR FEELINGS, A POLITICAL PRICE IT APPARENTLY BELIEVED WAS TOO HIGH TO PAY AT THE PRESENT STAGE OF ITS HEAVY EFFORTS TO RESTORE DEMOCRATIC NORMALCY.

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4. IT IS DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO MEASURE THE RELATIVE WEIGHT GIVEN TO "DEMOCRACY" AND ANTI-AMERICANISM BY THE CLOSE TO 350,000 PARTICIPANTS AND SPECTATORS IN THE NOVEMBER 17 MARCH. FOR MANY, REGRETTABLY TOO MANY, THE TWO ARE PRESENTLY INSEPARABLE. THERE IS, OF COURSE, A MINORITY WHICH REJECTS THIS CONCEPT. AMONG THEM ARE THOSE WHO WERE THOROUGHLY ALARMED BY THE PROSPECT OF COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST

BANNERS FLUTTERING DOWN THE MAIN STREETS OF THE
GREEK CAPITAL AND WHOSE GROWING FEARS OF THE "COMMUNIST
MENANCE" WERE AGGRAVATED LAST NIGHT.

5. FOR OUR PART WE CAN HOPE THAT, OVER THE YEARS,
NOVEMBER 17 WILL BE INCREASINGLY A CELEBRATION OF
DEMOCRACY AND DMINISHINGLY A FOCUS FOR STOKING ANTI-
AMERICANISM. WE SHALL BE REPORTING SEPARATELY ON
OUR EFFORTS BOTH THE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COUNTRY-AT
LARGE IN TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.
KUBISCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, PERSONAL OPINION, ANTIAMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS, COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS08955
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750401-0689
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751134/aaaabdzt.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 ATHENS 8919
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE 1975 POLYTECHNION ANNIVERSARY -- A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS
TAGS: PINS, PDEV, GR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006